

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

EUR-12 NIC-01 SY-05 OPR-02 A-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 AGR-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00

FEAE-00 INT-05 OES-03 OC-05 CCO-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /101 W

----- 104025

O R 181656Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7526

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 0621

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, TD, PINS

SUBJECT: "PRAYER MARCH" BY OIL AND SUGAR WORKERS

BROKEN UP BY POLICE

REF: POS 605 AND PREVIOUS

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. HEAVILY-ARMED AND WELL-EQUIPPED POLICE BROKE UP THE PLANNED PROTEST MARCH OF OIL AND SUGAR WORKERS FROM SAN FERNANDO TO PORT OF SPAIN MARCH 18 SHORTLY AFTER IT BEGAN. THE POLICE REPORTEDLY ARRESTED OILFIELD WORKERS TRADE UNION (OWTU) PRESIDENT GENERAL GEORGE WEEKES, ONE OF THE ORGANIZERS OF THE MARCH, AND VERNON JAMADAR, A LEADER OF THE DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY. THE POLICE DISPERSED THE CROWD WITH TEAR GAS AND REPORTEDLY BEAT UP SEVERAL PARTICIPANTS, ONLOOKERS, AND NESMEN COVERING THE EVENT.

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2. ACCORDING TO THE PRE-ANNOUNCED PLANS OF THE UNITED LABOUR FRONT, ABOUT FIVE TO SIX THOUSAND SUGAR AND OIL WORKERS GATHERED AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE OWTU IN SAN FERNANDO EARLY ON MARCH 18 TO BEGIN THEIR "WALK TO CONTINUE PRAYERS FOR BREAD, PEACE AND JUSTICE" FROM SAN FERNANDO TO PORT OF SPAIN WHERE THEY PLANNED TO DELIVER A PETITION AND LIST OF DEMANDS TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL. LEADING THE MARCH WERE BASDEO PANDAY, PRESIDENT OF THE ALL TRINIDAD SUGAR WORKERS UNION, AND WEEKES.

3. POLICE COMMISSIONER C.A. MAY HAD WARNED THE ULF THAT THE PLANNED MARCH WAS ILLEGAL, IN CONTRAVENTION OF THE SUMMARY OFFENSES (AMENDMENT) ACT OF 1972 WHICH PROHIBITS PUBLIC MARCHES WITHOUT POLICE PERMISSION. HE FOREWARNED THE ORGANIZERS THAT THE MARCH WOULD BE STOPPED. THE MARCHERS CONTENDED THAT THEY WERE TAKING PART IN A RELIGIOUS PROCESSION WHICH WAS NOT COVERED BY THE LAW.

END UNCLASSIFIED. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL.

4. COMMENT: AS OF MID-MORNING, THE POLICE APPEARED TO BE IN CONTROL. THIS MAY NOT BE THE END OF THE CONFRONTATION, HOWEVER, IF THE CROWD REASSEMBLES AND AGAIN TRIES TO MARCH OR IF IT BECOMES UNRULY IN RETRIBUTION AGAINST POLICE ACTION.

5. THUS FARE THE GOTT HAS RELIED EXCLUSIVELY ON POLICE AND THE ONLY WARNINGS OR EXPRESSIONS OF OPPOSITION TO THE INTENDED DEMONSTRATORS/STRIKERS/ MARCHERS HAS COME FROM POLICE COMMISSIONER MAY. THE CONTINUING COMPLETE SILENCE BY PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS AND HIS CABINET HAS OFFERED LITTLE FOCUS FOR DEFUSING PASSIONS OR CATALYZING FORCES OF RESTRAINT. FORCE AND TEAR GAS HAVE NOW BEEN USED IN A DIRECT USE OF THE POLICE POWER. WITHOUT SOME POLITICAL MOVES NOW TO MOBILIZE THE PUBLIC AGAINST FURTHER DEMONSTRATIONS IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT TODAY'S EPISODE WILL DO MORE THAN INCREASE DISAFFECTION AND LAY THE

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SEED OF FURTHER CONFLICT.
MILLER

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NNN

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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